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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of NBC radio stations, Monday, August 2, 1937.

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Hello Farm and Home Hour Folks. Well here we are, the second of August, the hours of daylight are shortening and the summer is rapidly slipping by. All of which reminds us that it is time to be thinking about fall gardens, also canning and drying plenty of good fruits and vegetables for winter use. It is surprising how many vegetables may be planted in our gardens as late as the first week in August and still have them mature in time for use before freezing weather. That's where you southern folks have it on the rest of us because you can go right on gathering good vegetables from your gardens all fall and winter.

If any of you happened to be traveling through the Great Lakes Region during June and July you might have seen gangs of men, women, boys and girls on their knees in the onion fields weeding the onions. If you were to go through that country any time during the next month you would observe that the tops of those onions had fallen over and that the bulbs were beginning to ripen and soon be in condition to pull, cure and send to market.

Now it happens that onions are one of the leading vegetable crops of the country. The commercial production, in addition to all those grown in home gardens, for the period 1931 to 1935 averaged about 1 billion 300 million pounds, or more than 10 pounds for every man woman and child in the country. And the next time you feel inclined to turn up your nose when the onions are passed, please remember that the commercial onion industry is a 14 million dollar baby for the onion growers of the United States. In 1936 the crop jumped to 17,322,000 sacks of 100 pounds each or a total of 1,732,200,000 pounds. That was too large a crop and average prices paid the growers dropped to 76 cents a hundred pounds as compared with \$1.32 in 1935.

I do not need to remind you that it is a big job to grow all those 17 million plus bags of onions but the curing is a big item even after the crop is grown. Recently Mr. J. W. Park of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics conducted an investigation of the methods of curing and marketing onions and the results have been published as Technical Bulletin No. 555. Don't let that name "Technical Bulletin" scare you for the bulletin is written in the language of the farms where the onions are grown and of the markets where the onions are sold. I wrote Farmers' Bulletin No. 354 on Onion Culture away back in 1899, before many of you were born, and through various revisions and numerous reprints No. 354 is still on our list of Farmers' Bulletins. Mr. Park covers some of the points that are included in No. 354, especially the curing of the onion crop and from that he goes right on through the various processes of screening and grading the onions, the packing the onions in crates or mesh bags for the market, Federal-State inspection and the issuance of the inspection certificate, the loading the cars, the storage of the onions in great storage houses and even the financing of the crop.

In the latter part of the bulletin Mr. Park has taken up a discussion of the different markets, their onion requirement, and the location of the onion fields or producing sections from which these various markets are supplied. He

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has also given some mighty good sidelights on prices and price trends that should be of interest to every onion grower who expects to continue in the business. Many years ago the growing of Bermuda Type onions was started in Texas, especially around Laredo. I'll never forget my first visit to the Texas Bermuda onion fields. That was back in the horse and buggy days and the Mexican boy who was sent to drive me to the onion farms could not speak a word of English and I only knew about a dozen words of Spanish, but the old horse could understand both English and Spanish though he spoke neither, and so we got along fairly well. The Bermuda Type onion business has grown to large proportions and during late years the production of the large Sweet Spanish or Valencia onion has developed in certain of our far western and southwestern States. Incidentally the workers in our division imported the first seed of the Valencia and placed it in the hands of some of the Experiment Station men in the Western States to try out and this was the foundation of the present Sweet Spanish onion industry in this country.

In closing I want to compliment Mr. Park on the splendid piece of work he has done in collecting the facts and bringing them together in Technical Bulletin No. 555. This publication is bound to be of great value alike to growers, shippers and dealers in onions. And, if you don't mind I'll just take another helping of those good fried onions with my steak.